A

LETTER

TO

Samuel Holden, Esq;

Occasioned by his SPEECH delivered from the *Chair*, at a General Assembly of DISSENTERS, on the 29th of *November*, 1732.

The Repeal of the Corporation and Test-Acts, CAN be opposed by None, but such as are unhappily under the Power of BIGOTRY, *or* the Bias of INTEREST.

Mr. HOLDEN's *Speech*, *Paragr.* I.

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A

LETTER

TO

Samuel Holden, Eſq; *&c.*

SIR,

I Have peruſed your Speech, as I found it in the publick Papers of *Saturday* laſt; and having heard no Complaint againſt the Printer, that he has ſent Abroad a falſe Speech, or a true one without Warrant; I

muſt take it for granted, that what he has publiſhed, is genuine, and by Direction.

To tell you my Opinion of it; I think it is *in the main* a wiſe Speech, duly guarded, and well adapted to the Ends you had in View, --- The diſſuading your Friends from their Attempt to procure a Repeal of the Corporation and Teſt Acts during the preſent Parliament, ---The pointing out to them a Juncture that may be more favourable, --- and The Convincing them of the Importance and Neceſſity of maintaing *Unanimity* in the mean Time.

There is no doubt, but many Members who inwardly wiſh well to the Cauſe, will be ſhy of appearing *openly* in it, while they have an Election in View, leſt they

they ſhould weaken any *Part* of their Intereſt; and others may not readily find, upon the Balance, whether they ſhall gain or loſe by appearing for it, and may therefore diſcreetly keep away; and the more zealous and ſanguine, who may have Views *beyond* the Repeal of thoſe two Acts, will naturally think it ill judg'd, to *begin* a Work at the Concluſion of a Parliament, which will not allow Time ſufficient to *accompliſh* the *whole* Deſign. But after the Elections are over, Friends will ſpeak and act with Freedom and Courage; when they are to have no Converſation with Electors for ſeven whole Years; and have Time enough before them to finiſh that Work, and to put the Oppoſers out of a Condition either

ther to *Help* or *Hurt* for the Time to come. And tho' it may be ſaid, that Miniſters are apt to talk a different Language *before* and *after* Elections; and that the Face of Affairs at Home and Abroad may not always continue the ſame: *That* is an Argument that cuts both Ways, and neither Side can tell to whoſe Advantage or Diſadvantage the *Difference of Times and Seaſons* may turn.

In the next Place, you are certainly in the Right to preſs Unanimity among Friends, in order to have greater Weight at the approaching Elections. The Diſſenters have of late Years acted an unpolitick Part, in *Dividing*; firſt, upon the Point of Arianiſm and Orthodoxy; then, upon the Point of Subſcribing or Not-Subſcribing

ſcribing to Creeds and Articles; and again, about the beſt Method of Preaching, whether in the *Old* or the *New* Way. Great Heats have been among them upon thoſe ſeveral Points; and the Diviſions they have occaſion'd, have been very prejudicial to the common Cauſe, and render'd the Menaces of that Body far leſs formidable than heretofore. And if it ſhould further appear, that their proneneſs to quarrel among themſelves, will not ſuffer them to agree even in proper Meaſures of *attacking the Eſtabliſhed Church*, the World will be apt to take it for granted, they can agree in nothing.

All this therefore is wholſome and ſeaſonable Advice, *within Doors* and *among Friends*; but ſurely the making theſe Things

publick, was a very wrong Step. It might eaſily be foreſeen, that the reſerving this Work for a *new Parliament*, muſt alarm and awaken the Friends of the Church, and raiſe a ſuitable Spirit among them, and ſuggeſt to them the Neceſſity of entring into Counter-Aſſociations for the Support of their Eſtabliſhment. When Notice of an Attack is given ſo *long* before, and in ſuch a *publick* Manner, can it be ſuppos'd, that they, againſt whom this is intended, will ſleep on in Security, and not rouſe themſelves, and make the beſt Proviſion they can for a Defence? And if it ſhould ſo fall out, that the Cry at the next Elections ſhould be, The *Church*, and The *Diſſenters*; and that Cry ſhould be attended with untoward Con-

ſequences

ſequences ; who will be in the Blame ? They who were ready to protect the Diſſenters in a full Enjoyment of their Toleration, and to go on with them in a friendly and peaceable Manner upon the Foundation, which was laid at the Revolution ; or they, who, out of a Thirſt after temporal Power and Profit, and without the leaſt Pretence of any Uneaſineſs from the Church, are breaking down the Revolution-Barrier, and opening an endleſs Scene of Jealouſy and Confuſion.

I hope, you will forgive me the Freedom I have taken, in telling you my Thoughts of your Conduct in that Affair, ſo far as concerns your Diſſenting Brethren, and the Cauſe they are engaged

in. But to deal clearly with you, you had receiv'd no Trouble from me, if you had ſtopt here. Thus far you acted *in Character*, ſuitably to your Profeſſion as a Diſſenter, and to your Station as Chairman at a publick Conſultation for the Good of the Community. But what, I beſeech you, could tempt you to enter into the Characters and Conduct of others who are not of your Body, and to declare deciſively from the Chair, that the Deſign of repealing the Corporation and Teſt Acts, *can be oppoſed by none, but ſuch as are under the Power of* BIGOTRY, *or the Biaſs of* INTEREST *?*

BIGOTRY is a Term appropriated to religious Matters, and implies ſuch an *Exceſs* of Zeal for ſome one

one Sect in Religion, or for ſome one Way of Worſhip, as diſpoſes Men to Unkindneſs and Severity towards all others; and the Oppoſition you ſuppoſe was not like to come from any Quarter, but the Church of *England*. And ſhall a Zeal for the Preſervation of that Church, which the Laws of the Land have eſtabliſhed, and which gives not the leaſt Diſturbance to thoſe who diſſent from it, be called *Bigotry*; and thoſe Perſons who exert that Zeal when they ſee it actually attack'd, be branded with the odious Name of *Bigots*? It was a wiſe Part in you, and thoſe who were in the ſame Sentiments with you, to diſcourage and diſappoint an Attempt of the more eager Part of your Meeting, to pro-

pronounce the Corporation and Teſt Acts a *Grievance*; and the Reaſon given againſt it was a good one, That they ſubſiſted *as yet* under the Sanction and Authority of the Legiſlature. It is to be wiſh'd that the ſame Reaſoning had occur'd to you, before you pronounced a Zeal for that Church, which ſubſiſts *as yet* upon the Sanction and Authority of ſo many Acts of Parliament, to be *Bigotry*.

The other Imputation, of *being biaſs'd by Intereſt*, is no leſs ſtrange. Was it ever thought before, that the Concern which is ſhewn by any Man or Body of Men, for the Security of an Intereſt with which the Laws have inveſted them, was to be condemned as a Biaſs *criminal* or *undue*? And can any thing be

be more ſurpriſing, than to find that the Imputation comes from thoſe, who in the Purſuit of this whole Affair can have Nothing in View but *temporal Intereſt*, without the leaſt Mixture of Religion or Conſcience, which are fully ſecured to them by *former* Laws ?

Mutual Charity and Candor in paſſing Judgment upon others, eſpecially in Matters of Religion, is a Character by which the Diſſenters have long affected to diſtinguiſh themſelves. But ſurely you forgot that Part of your Character, when you pronounced roundly and without Reſerve, that thoſe who were like to oppoſe your Bill, *could* be led into that Oppoſition by nothing but *Bigotry* or *Intereſt*. Charity would have directed you to hope

hope and believe, that many of thoſe from whom the Oppoſition was expected, and who knew the ill Influence of ſuch a Bill upon the Government and Worſhip of the eſtabliſhed Church, would act out of a ſincere Concern to preſerve a Government which they are firmly perſuaded to be as old as the Days of the Apoſtles, and a Worſhip which they believe to be more agreeable than any other to the ancient Liturgies of the Chriſtian Church. Charity would have further ſuggeſted, that the ſame Perſons, out of an honeſt Regard to the National Proſperity in Church and State, might be influenced in their Oppoſition, firſt, by looking back to the diſtracted and miſerable Condition to which both were reduc'd when

that

that Goverment and Worſhip were aboliſhed, and then, by a juſt Apprehenſion that the like Miſeries and Confuſions would return, when-ever they ſhould be aboliſhed again. And a good Subject, who is a Lover of Peace and Quietneſs, and delights to ſee the Adminiſtration of his Prince eaſy and unembarraſs'd, may well be allow'd to have an Eye to the Diſturbances which almoſt unavoidably ariſe from publick Attempts of this Nature. Theſe Motives of Oppoſition, (all or any of them) might well have been ſuppoſed by the Candour and Charity of a Diſſenter; and though they might perhaps be too grating and unpalatable to be aſſign'd in Form, they ſhould at leaſt have kept him from

aſſigning two others of the moſt odious Nature that could well be picked out, *Bigotry*, and *Self-Intereſt*.

Though the Conferences upon this great Affair are caſt into a new Shape, I preſume your Commiſſion as Chairman ſtill ſubſiſts, and may occaſion a ſecond Speech in a ſhort Time, when the Deputies from the ſeveral Congregations in and about *London*, ſhall be returned. And on this Suppoſition, give me Leave to leave this ſhort Advice with you, *To Act in Character*; omit Nothing that may tend to promote the Diſſenting Intereſt, and ſuggeſt Nothing that may ſo much as imply, that they who are in the *Oppoſition*, and mean no more than to *defend* the

Bounds

Bounds which the Conſtitution has aſſigned them, do not act upon Motives at leaſt as juſt and as honourable, as they who are in the *Attack*, and without the leaſt Provocation, are making Inroads upon their peaceable Neighbours.

I am,

SIR,

Your ſincere Friend,

and Well-wiſher.

Dec. 5, 1732.

FINIS.